

Remarks

Claims 1-20 are pending. Claims 2 and 3 are cancelled and claims 21 and 22 are added herein. Accordingly, claims 1 and 4-22 are at issue.

Claims 1, 2, 4-7, and 9 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,250,677 to Fujimura. Claims 1-6 and 9-11 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as anticipated by JP 2001301555 to Kosugi, et al. Claims 1-5, 9, 11, and 12 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,932,385 to Hawthorn, et al. Claims 1, 2, 4-7, 9 and 13 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,967,545 to Iijima, et al. in view of Fujimura. Claim 14 stands rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as unpatentable over Iijima, et al. and Fujimura, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,636,861 to Orsulak, et al. Claims 15-18 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as unpatentable over Iijima, et al. in view of Fujimura. Claims 19 and 20 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as unpatentable over Iijima, et al. and Fujimura, and further in view of Orsulak, et al.

Initially, the indication of allowable subject matter in claim 8 is noted with appreciation. Accordingly, claim 8 is rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of its base claim 1 and its intervening dependent claim 7 so that claim 8 should now be in condition for allowance.

The rejections, as they may apply to the claims presented herein, are respectfully traversed.

Amended claim 1 is directed to an airbag device including an airbag having a vent opening and an interior that is inflated during airbag deployment with the vent opening allowing inflation gas to escape from the airbag interior during deployment thereof. Claim 1, as amended, calls for a retainer for being mounted to the vehicle and from which the airbag is deployed. An elongate securing member includes a portion extending through the vent opening in the interior of the airbag for being secured to the airbag to the vehicle. As amended, claim 1 further requires a fastener external of the retainer and adapted for connecting the securing member to the vehicle remote from the retainer. None of the cited art, alone or in combination, discloses or suggests the elongate securing member that extends through a vent opening in the interior of an airbag for being secured thereto and that is connected to the vehicle via a fastener remote from the airbag retainer, as called for in amended claim 1.

More particularly, Fujimura shows a tether belt 42 extending through the mouth opening of the airbag to a winder 44 in the container 12 in which the airbag is stored prior to deployment thereof. In contrast, claim 1 requires a fastener that is external of the retainer and adapted for connecting the securing member to the vehicle remote from the retainer. Similarly, Hawthorn, et al. disclose a tethering element 30 connected to an anchoring strap 31 at one end of the strap with the other end of the strap 31 extending through the mouth opening of the airbag to be anchored to a ring element 32 in the inflator housing 42. Accordingly, like Fujimura, Hawthorn, et al. fail to disclose or suggest the recited fastener external of the retainer and which is adapted for connecting the securing member to the vehicle remote from the retainer. Kosugi, et al. disclose straps that are adapted to control the inflated shape of the airbag, and not for anchoring the airbag to the vehicle as with the claimed elongate securing member. In this regard, all of the embodiments have the ends of the straps secured to the airbag itself whether in the interior of the airbag or along the exterior thereof. In FIG. 4, Kosugi, et al. show a strap 22 having its ends secured in the airbag and extending around the back of the retainer 30 such that when the airbag deploys, the strap is pulled in the deployment direction with the external portion of the strap pulled tightly against the retainer for controlling the inflated shape of the airbag. Accordingly, Kosugi, et al. also fail to disclose or suggest the recited fastener that secures the elongate securing member to the vehicle remote from the retainer.

With respect to the combination of Iijima, et al. and Fujimura, there is no disclosure or suggestion of the elongate securing member of an airbag having a vent opening through which the elongate securing member extends into the interior thereof for being secured to the airbag, along with the fastener that is external of the retainer for connecting the securing member to the vehicle remote from the retainer. In Iijima, et al., the airbag 14 includes a vent hole 17 having a pressure regulating valve *V* placed thereover for regulating the escape of internal gas from the airbag (see column 2, lines 65-68 and column 3, lines 1-25, and FIGS. 3 and 4). The valve includes a plate 24 that is placed on the outer surface side of the vent hole 17. Accordingly, given the presence of valve *V*, it is highly improbable that one skilled in the art would believe Iijima, et al. would suggest that an elongate securing member should extend under the plate 24 unseating it from the airbag, and then through the vent hole 17, as called for in amended claim 1. Further, the entirely internally disposed tether belt 42 of Fujimura would not suggest that it should be extended through a valve vent opening to be secured to a

fastener remotely from the container 12. Accordingly, it is believed claim 1, and claims 4-14 which depend cognately therefrom, are allowable over the relied upon art.

Claim 15 is directed to an airbag device including an airbag for being inflated during airbag deployment and an elongate securing member for securing the airbag to the motorcycle. As amended, claim 15 calls for the elongate securing member to have a predetermined length with the majority of the length thereof extending centrally in a fore and aft direction along the motorcycle in an area generally between legs of a rider of the motorcycle prior to airbag deployment to minimize interference with the rider during airbag deployment. None of the relied upon art, either alone or in combination, discloses or suggests the elongate securing member having a majority of its length extending centrally in a fore and aft direction along the motorcycle, as called for in amended claim 15.

More particularly, Iijima, et al. have an anchoring member 18 that extends from the airbag 14 in the housing 12 to an adjacent mounting piece 20 below the seat 5, as best seen in FIG. 3. Accordingly, there is only a very short distance that the anchoring member 18 has to extend between the mounting piece 20 and the airbag 14 with the anchoring member 18 being folded, as shown in FIG. 3 and as stated at column 3, lines 30-37. Once the airbag is deployed, the anchoring member is pulled and unfolded to its full length, as shown in FIG. 7. As can be seen by comparing the length of the anchoring member 18 shown in FIG. 7 and its length shown folded, prior to deployment in FIG. 3, it does not extend for the majority of its length centrally in the fore and aft direction along the motorcycle prior to airbag deployment, as required of the elongate securing member of amended claim 15. The entirely internal tether belt 42 of Fujimura does not teach anything with respect to the elongate securing member called for in amended claim 15. Accordingly, it is believed that claim 15, and claims 16-20 which depend cognately therefrom, are allowable over the relied upon art.

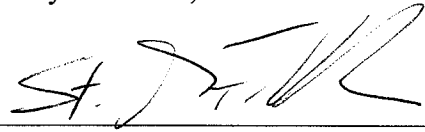
Added claim 21 is directed to a motorcycle including a body, a seat for a rider, handlebars forwardly of the seat for rider steering of the motorcycle, and an airbag for being deployed and inflated in emergency conditions. Claim 21 further calls for a retainer from which the airbag is deployed and being mounted to the body adjacent the handlebars and forwardly spaced from the seat along the body, an elongate securing member for the airbag, and a fastener for the securing member being mounted to the body adjacent the seat. Claim 21 also requires opposite end portions of the elongate securing member with one of the end portions secured to the airbag and the other end portion secured to the fastener such that with

the spacing between the retainer and the fastener there is a long intermediate portion of the elongate securing member extending centrally along the motorcycle body prior to airbag deployment.

None of the relied upon art discloses or suggests a motorcycle as called for in added claim 21. Of the relied upon references, only Iijima, et al. disclose an elongate securing member that has one end anchored to the motorcycle body. However, the arrangement of the airbag retainer and the fastener for the securing member are much different in Iijima, et al. than in the motorcycle of added claim 21. Iijima, et al. do not have a retainer that is mounted to the motorcycle body adjacent the handlebars. Instead, Iijima, et al. show the airbag module being mounted closely adjacent to and in contact with the motorcycle seat 5. Accordingly, Iijima, et al. also fail to show a retainer that is forwardly spaced from the seat as called for in claim 21. Iijima, et al. further fail to disclose or suggest the recited long intermediate portion of the elongate securing member that extends centrally along the motorcycle body prior to airbag deployment. Because there is no spacing between the airbag module *M* and the seat 5, the anchoring member 18 of Iijima, et al. only has to extend for a very short distance between the mounting piece 20 and the airbag 14 adjacent thereto. As such, Iijima, et al. lack the recited end portions of the elongate securing member secured to the airbag and to the fastener such that with the spacing between the retainer and the fastener there is a long intermediate portion of the elongate securing member extending centrally along the motorcycle body prior to airbag deployment, as called for in claim 21. Accordingly, claim 21, and claim 22 which depends therefrom, are believed allowable over the relied upon art.

Based on the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1, 2, and 4-20, and consideration and allowance of claims 21 and 22, are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

By: 
Stephen S. Favakeh
Registration No. 36,798

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FITCH, EVEN, TABIN & FLANNERY
120 S. LaSalle St., Suite 1600
Chicago, IL 60603-3406
Telephone: 312/577-7000
Facsimile: 312/577-7007